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ABSTRACT

Violence in schools has reached epidemic proportions. This paper uses an educator's perspective to examine issues of school violence. It is believed that violence arises from a combination of family-related issues, the media, hatreds and phobias, and poverty. Families have become increasingly fractured and dysfunctional while violence on television and in videos is on the rise. Hate crimes continue to increase and inadequate employment threatens to burgeon an increasing underclass. Another key problem is the availability of guns which brings a heightened severity in violent casualties. Many young children witness acts of violence, to their detriment, and the best time to prevent aggressive tendencies from developing is to address these tendencies in early childhood. To deal effectively with violence, a strong involvement of all members of society is urged. Schools, communities, organizations, and government must all be active, collaborative participants in the quest for peace. A number of suggestions is given for schools in particular to curb violence; evidence shows that students respond when they are given the opportunity to be a part of the solution. However, schools cannot be solely responsible for fixing the problem. Parents, the community, lawmakers, and schools are all encouraged to work together to establish peace. (RJM)

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ONE EDUCATOR'S VIEWS ABOUT EDUCATION, VIOLENCE AND SCHOOLS

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I wish to thank Melissa Etlin and Richard R. Verdugo for their assistance in putting this paper together. I alone, however, bear responsibility for any errors. The views contained in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Education Association. Direct all correspondence to Earl H. Jones, Director, Human and Civil Rights, National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

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ONE EDUCATOR'S VIEWS ABOUT EDUCATION, VIOLENCE, AND SCHOOLS

I. INTRODUCTION

Violence in or near schools has reached epidemic proportions. Nearly three million crimes occur in or near schools every year; 16,000 take place each day, or one every six seconds. The cost is not only in human life: school violence and crime cost taxpayers over $200 million a year.

Regardless of race, family income, or region of the country, no child in America is immune from the fear of violence. School violence, which affects youth between the ages of three and twenty-two, is neither an urban problem nor exclusively a public school problem. No school is safe from violence.

Everyone who comes into contact with a child--parents, educators, child care and health care providers--has the potential to contribute to a child's attitude toward violence and inclination toward violent behavior. Similarly, family, schools, mass media, community groups and religious organizations can and should contribute positively to a child's sense of safety and preference for alternatives to violence. By working with communities and with plans tailored to local conditions, educators and citizens can make a difference.

This paper uses an educator's perspective on violence in addressing the following questions:

1. What conditions contribute to the current manifestations of violence?
2. How has the rapid increase in the availability and use of handguns affected the nature of violence in minority communities?
3. Based upon my professional experience what do I see are the most significant issues that result from violence?

4. How can NEA and various organizations with which I am affiliated address the issues of violence and handguns?
5. As a result of the preceding questions, what policy agendas and strategies may be proposed, developed, and implemented so that critical local, state, and national actions can be undertaken to eliminate handguns?

II. WHAT CONDITIONS CONTRIBUTE TO THE CURRENT MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLENCE?

In this section I briefly discuss four broad causes which have been cited as causes of violence: family-related issues, the media, hatreds and phobias, and poverty.

A. Family-Related Issues

In our society, families at all income levels are becoming fractured or dysfunctional. One of the strongest indicators is the number of reported incidents of child abuse and neglect which have soared recently. The number of children reported abused or neglected in 1992 rose to 2.9 million, three times the figure for 1980.[1]

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), other child development or family factors that contribute to violent behavior include biological conditions, parenting, emotional and cognitive development, gender differences, sex role socialization, relations to peers, and cultural environment.[2]

Parents are sometimes a major reason for their child's problem. Parental abuse of alcohol and other drugs often results in the physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect of children, which exposes them to abuse by others. Abuse at the hands of parents leads children to think and solve problems in ways that later lead to their developing aggressive

[1]Children's Defense Fund. (1994) Ths State of America's Children Yearbook, Washington, D.C., 88.
[2]American Psychological Association, Violence and Youth: Psychology's Response, 17.

behavior patterns. In addition, substance abuse by parents tends to promote the same behavior in their children. It is clear that parents must be brought in as part of the solution.

Many children face another problem--domestic violence. At least 3.3 million children may be witnessing domestic violence each year. Children who see adults unable to control their own aggressiveness often grow up with the same untamed emotions. If they've witnessed violence against someone they love, they often grieve over their perceived failure at being unable to save that person.

While parental neglect is less overtly horrible than parental abuse, it still has its negative consequences. As one report notes, some students spend as many hours with Beavis and Butthead as they do with Mom and Dad. As reported by the APA, one of parents' primary responsibilities is to teach children how to handle aggressive and negative emotions appropriately.[3] One physician-author has written, "If all the children in America learned at home how to manage anger and aggression non-violently, our homicide and assault rates would decline by 50%--maybe even 75%."[4]

Finally, there is the matter of the disintegration of the American family. National statistics indicate two very troubling phenomena: rising divorce rates and the increase of single-parent households.

B. The Media

Television

The second major influence on youth violence is the media and, as we are all aware, children are exposed to media violence at a very early age. The APA estimates in a recent study that the average child who watches television sees 8,000 murders and more than 100,000 other acts of violence before finishing elementary school.

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[3] IBID.
[4] A Generation of Killers, U.S. News and World Report, 36.

The level of violence on commercial television has remained constant over the past 20 years. In prime time there are five to six violent acts per hour; on Saturday morning children's programs there are 20 to 25 violent acts per hour. More graphic violence and higher sexual content are available in the 60% of American homes that have VCRs or cable TV.[5]

Although the nation's crime rate has remained basically unchanged, the three network evening newscasts doubled their coverage of crime and violence last year. A survey from the Center for Media and Public Affairs showed that coverage of murder was three times higher in 1993 than in 1992 while the murder rate had remained virtually constant. The three networks aired 1,632 domestic crime stories in 1993.[6]

In addition, Children Now, a California-based children's advocacy organization conducted an independent survey of 850 children in which more than half of the respondents said that they felt angry or depressed after they listened to the news. Children Now also examined the content of the evening newscasts and found that 48% of all stories about children focused on crime and violence. In a review of five major American newspapers during the same time, that number was 40 percent.[7]

Certain cable TV channels are even more violent than regular television. The cable TV industry is now devising technology which would allow parents to block violent television shows. It is also calling for a concentrated series of anti-violence broadcasts to be called Voices Against Violence, as well as for its rating, monitoring, and channel blocking plans.[8]

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[5]American Psychological Association, Op. Cit., 32.
[6]Edwards, Ellen. (1994, March). Networks Make Crime Top Story, Washington Post.
[7]IBID.
[8]IBID.

2. Videos

TV is only part of the problem. Other media like rap music and video games are also under attack. Police departments are increasingly trying to outlaw "gangsta rap" that calls for violence against women and the police.

Video game manufacturers have now promised to put ratings on their products before Congress does it for them. In the video game, "Mortal Kombat," players can win by removing the spinal column of a victim. Another game, "Night Trap," features scantily clad college women screaming as drills are pressed into their necks.

The influence of violent videos is shown by a recent mass murder by an enraged gunman. A man on the Long Island Railroad (in New York) gunned down commuters as if he were playing a video game. The question is no longer whether video games should be rated, but how stringent those ratings should be.

C. Hate Motivated Violence

A third factor contributing to violence is hate. Hate can be expressed in numerous ways and has many targets, but four seem to be prevalent in our society: racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and sexism. The effect of these attitudes by a significant proportion of our population contributes greatly to hate motivated violence.

There isn't a need to dwell at length on each of these concepts, but a few comments are in order.

1. It appears that racist motivated violence is on the increase. It should be made clear from the outset, however, that no one group is to be excluded from racist behavior. Blacks, Hispanics, whites, Asians, and other ethnic and racial groups have reacted violently to one or more other groups. Many of the more recent acts of violence appear to be based on a cross-section of economics and xenophobia.

Data from the FBI's first statistical program on hate crime indicate that a total of "...4,558 hate crimes incidents involving 4,755 offenses were reported in 1991."[9] And of these offenses as reported by the FBI's data, race motivated hate crimes accounted for 62% of hate crimes. Moreover, the highest proportion of this racially motivated hate crime is aimed at Blacks: 35.5% of the 62.3% of race motivated hate crime was against Blacks.

2. There appears to be very little tolerance for the life styles of gays and lesbians. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute documented 1,822 incidents of homophobic violence and defamation reported to agencies in five metropolitan areas in 1991, an increase of 31 percent from 1990. Areas with the highest homophobic incidents in 1991 were New York City (592), San Francisco (473), Minneapolis/St. Paul (338), Chicago (210), and Boston (209).

3. Anti-Semitism is on the increase. Nation-wide anti-Semitism is by far the most prevalent form of anti-religious hate crimes. Of the 917 anti-religious hate crimes reported in 1991, the FBI cites 792 anti-Semitic hate crimes. The next most prevalent are anti-Protestant and anti-Catholic.

4. Sexist behavior is an important cause of violence directed at women. The most prevalent kind of sexist behavior is rape. The number of rapes increased significantly since 1980. In 1980, the FBI reported about 83 thousand forcible rapes, by 1989 the number increased to about 95 thousand.

If we consider forcible rape as a rate per 100,000 population, the statistics are quite staggering. In 1980, the forcible rape rate per 100,000 population was 37%, and 38% in 1989. In contrast, in 1980, the rate per 100,000 females was 72% and 74% in

[9]Federal Bureau of Investigation. 1992. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. It should be noted, however, that these data are to be interpreted cautiously because only about one-in-five of those institutions asked to report hate-motivated violence actually did so.

1989. Finally, in 1980 the forcible rape rate per 100,000 females age 12 and older was a staggering 86% and 88% in 1989.[10]

D. Issues Related to Poverty

Finally, poverty status is an important contribution to violence. The lack of jobs, perennial or permanent unemployment, the lack or absence of adequate social services, and increasing inequality in many communities have created a large and ever increasing underclass in our society.

Having few opportunities for upward mobility, or of earning a decent living and other socioeconomic amenities that we all take for granted, members of the underclass may turn to illegal activities as a way of earning a living. In many cases, violence may result from such activities, for example, drug marketing, gang activities, and other types of illegal economic activities (National Research Council, 1993).[11]

III. HOW HAS THE RAPID INCREASE IN THE AVAILABILITY OF HANDGUNS AFFECTED THE NATURE OF VIOLENCE IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES?

A. Access to Guns

Easy access to guns, especially handguns, has contributed greatly to the increase of violence. The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) points out that guns are less highly regulated than teddy bears, toasters and other consumer products. There are approximately 200 million guns in this country. Students can buy guns off the street for as little as $25 or "borrow" them from parents.

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[10] Data are from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1991 (111th edition.) Washington, DC. 1991. Table 298.

[11] National Research Council. (1993). Albert J. Reiss, Jr., and Jeffrey A. Roth, eds., *Understanding and Preventing Violence*. Washington, DC.

In fact, more than one in five male high school students surveyed in urban neighborhoods owns a gun, according to a U.S. Justice Department study. Among students the most popular guns are: automatic/semiautomatic handgun (18%), revolver (15%), and having three or more guns (15%).

Access to guns is all too easy. Children can buy guns on many street corners. Estimates are that between 40% and 50% of American households have guns; half of these are handguns. Sixty-three percent of incidents involving guns on school property included high school students, 24% involved junior high students, 12% involved elementary school students, and one percent involved preschoolers. About 10% of all youth aged ten to 19 say that they either have fired a gun at someone or have had someone shoot at them.

B. The Nature of Violence in Minority Communities and in Schools

In minority communities, the easy access to guns has meant that the essential nature of violence is its lethalness. Minority adults and youth kill, maim, or wound one another at alarming rates. This section has two objectives. First, I briefly review data on homicides, wounding and maiming that occur among Blacks. Second, I present data on the same concepts but focus on schools.

1. Type of Violence in Minority Communities: A Brief Overview

a. *Homicides*. Homicide is the main cause of death for young Black males aged 15-24. Between 1980 and 1989, the rate of increase in Black young men's murders was 36%. By 1989, nearly 115 out of every 100,000 Black males were murder victims.

The APA notes that homicide is also the most common cause of death for young Black females as well as for young Black males. It is four times more likely for a

young Black woman to die by homicide than for a non-Black female. For a young Black man, the rate is 11 times higher than for a non-Black young man.[12]

As we know, violence disproportionately affects all people of color. Although rates of violence vary among the various minorities, in all ethnic groups they are highest for boys and men in the lowest economic circumstances. Again, poverty is the greatest common element. Among ethnic minority groups, violence and victimization rates are higher among the young and those who have not completed high school.

Aggressors and victims commonly resemble each other in terms of race, educational background, psychological profile, alcohol, and other drug use, and reliance on weapons. For all ethnic minorities, more violence occurs within the same group than between groups: 93% of Black homicide victims are killed by other Blacks, and 86% of whites are killed by other whites.

Gang violence is also a major issue in minority communities. Minority males are represented in disproportionate numbers in gangs and their violent actions though only a small percentage of youth join gangs. Homicide and aggravated assault are three times more likely to be committed by gang members than by nongang members.

Gang homicides have increased dramatically over the past 25 years. In the early 1970s, there were almost no homicides in the U.S. due to gang violence. By 1980, there were 351 gang-related homicides in Los Angeles alone and more than 1,500 gang-related homicides in Los Angeles between 1985 and 1989.

During the 1980s gang demographics changed--with members as young as nine and as old as 30. New roles for these members show an increase in gang involvement in drugs. Similarly, female involvement in gang violence is increasing even though males outnumber female in gangs by 20 to one. Less than five percent of gang violence is committed by females. Approximately 55% of gang members are Blacks and 33% are Hispanic.

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[12]American Psychological Association, Op. Cit., 12.

2. School Violence: A Brief Overview

According to 78% of the districts described in the National School Boards Association (NSBA) report, the two most frequent acts of school violence are student assaults on other students and weapons in the classroom. These are followed by student attacks on teachers, racial and ethnic violence, and gang-related violence. Student attacks on teachers were reported in 28% of the districts. NEA states that each day 6,250 teachers are physically attacked.[13]

What are the school characteristics that may contribute to violence? The National Research Council indicates that there are five: large classes; areas where confrontations can easily occur; mandatory behavioral routines and conformity that may contribute to anger, resentment, and rejection; inconsistencies in consequences for student misbehavior, and design of school buildings.

When violence occurs in school, it prevents teachers and students from concentrating on teaching and learning. NEA reports that, every day, 160,000 students skip classes because they fear physical harm. Aggressive and disruptive classroom behavior results in poor school achievement and peer relations. Then, when a child fails in school, the child takes on other antisocial behavior.

Students are both the largest group of victims and of witnesses of violence. Of 546 teenagers asked about violence they had seen at school, 83% had witnessed fighting, 16% had seen students assault teachers, 20% had seen a student pull a knife on someone, and 7% had witnessed someone being threatened with a gun.

While the highest rate of violence is student against student, the responses of teachers have also been the subject of studies. Of those teachers who rate their schools as fair or poor, only 44% feel safe. When teachers are victimized, they may require special counseling to avoid blaming themselves or viewing the incident as a professional failure. Co-workers may also need to be reassured as to school safety. Teachers who have

[13]National School Boards Association. The Epidemic of Violence in the Schools, 24.

witnessed violent incidents, fear violence, or cope daily with disruptive students often show symptoms of stress similar to symptoms shown by combat soldiers. They can suffer from fatigue, headaches, stomach pains, and hypertension.

A special type of violent crime that affects both students and teachers is rape, the fastest growing violent crime in the U.S. Approximately 97% of young rape victims know their attackers; only 31% reported the rape to the police. For girls and young women, more than half of sexual assaults occur in a dating situation. Children with physical or mental disabilities are particularly at risk for physical or sexual assault.

IV. BASED ON MY PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE, WHAT DO I SEE AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ISSUES THAT RESULT FROM VIOLENCE?

A. Child Witnesses to Violence

You don't have to be physically hurt to be a victim of violence. The effect on witnesses, particularly children, can be devastating. Even youth who are not direct victims of violence may be victimized by the pervasive presence of crime in their communities. A study in New Orleans of elementary age children showed that over 90% of those questioned had witnessed some type of violent incident, 70% had seen weapons used, and 40% had seen a dead body.

According to an interview in *NEA Today* (10/93) with Dr. Barry Zuckerman working with the Boston-based Child Witness to Violence Project, "Children who witness violence are likely to be developmentally damaged--they can't concentrate in school, they experience flashbacks in the forms of dreams and nightmares, they become more dependent on the people around them. They may eventually engage in risky behavior such as alcohol or drug abuse, or even turn to violence themselves."

Teachers and other school employees can help these children. As they work with students who have witnessed violent acts, school employees should be aware of possible behavioral changes. They should remember that most important thing is for children to be able to talk about what they've experienced. The first step is to listen. After that it may be necessary to refer the child for therapy.

B. Early Childhood and Violence

Early childhood is the best and most successful time to prevent aggressive tendencies from developing into full-fledged later violence. According to the APA, children who begin to show aggressive behavior early require prompt intervention. The greatest predictor of future violent behavior is a previous history of violence. Without systematic and effective intervention, early aggression will escalate into later violence and broaden into other kinds of antisocial behavior.

The APA notes that children who show a fearless, impulsive temperament very early in life may have a predisposition for aggressive and violent behavior. Some of these children may suffer from undiagnosed Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. The cognitive deficits that sometimes accompany Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may contribute to the development of violent behavior.[14] A mental health professional can administer tests that diagnose this condition, which afflicts approximately five percent of all boys.

ADHD often becomes evident during the early elementary school years. Thus, teachers who notice children with recurring behavioral problems should consider discussing this disability with parents, administrators, and school mental health professionals so that a consistent treatment plan may be developed.

There are developmental pathways that lead boys to violence. The APA reports that pre-violent behavior starts as defiance and progresses between the ages of 8

[14]American Psychological Association, Op. Cit. 20.

and 12 to annoying or bullying others. Between 12 and 14, it becomes minor antisocial behavior like lying, shoplifting, or fighting with other boys. And finally, it becomes almost relentless violence.[15]

Violence begins as early as elementary school. In fact, the National School Boards Association survey on school violence reports that one-fourth of all suspensions from schools around the country were for violent incidents committed by elementary school students.

Viewing violence, particularly at a young age, can have harmful lifelong consequences. It can increase the fear of becoming a victim of violence or increase desensitization to violence. It can also increase the viewer's appetite for becoming involved with violence.

Although we tend to think of youth violence as a high school problem, it has an enormous impact on all children. Homicide is the nation's third leading cause of death for elementary and middle school children. Only general accidents and cancer are higher.

C. Youth Violence

Three-quarters of youth violence victims are juveniles and teenagers. Statistics paint a dramatic and very frightening picture of both current facts and trends for the future. For instance--

- There were 2,555 juvenile homicides in 1990. By the year 2000, it is estimated that there will be 8,000.[16]
- Juvenile arrests for murder increased by 85% between 1987 and 1991.[17]
- Arrests for violent crimes by youths under 18, mainly boys, jumped in the period from 1970 to 1992 by 91%.[18]

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[15] U.S. News, Op. Cit., 36.
[16] National School Boards Association, Op. Cit., 3.
[17] IBID.
[18] U.S. News, Op. Cit., p. 26.

- Young people are being arrested for violent crimes at younger ages.[19]
- Homicide is the second leading cause of death for all youth.[20]
- The use of alcohol plays a major role in youth violence.[21]

Why do children die at the hands of other children in America's tough streets? According to *U.S. News and World Report*, "Sometimes the reason is a leather jacket or some pocket change, a menacing look, or more seriously, drug turf. Sometimes a victim is slain for 'props' which means proper respect that 'enhances' the killer's reputation and bragging rights. These are the reasons a life is lost. And the killers often simply respond with a smirk, a shrug, or a cold-blooded comment."[22]

Sometimes students aren't concerned with their safety in school, but with their safety going to and from school. This is one of many reasons why our crusade against violence must include a total community approach.

V. HOW CAN THE NEA AND VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH I AM AFFILIATED ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF VIOLENCE AND HANDGUNS?

If we are to effectively address violence, we need the strong involvement of all members of society. Schools, communities, organizations, and government must all be active, collaborative participants.

A. Schools

School solutions need to include a number of different factors--school climate, the role of the principal, campus safety, the school code of conduct, student involvement, staff development, and peer interaction.

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[19]National School Boards Association, Op. Cit., 3.
[20]Children's Defense Fund, Op. Cit.,
[21]American Psychological Association, Op. Cit., 27.
[22]U.S. News, Op. Cit., 35.

A school safety committee should be formed to create a safe school environment. It identifies all necessary tasks for handling an incident or crisis, and assigns staff members and back-ups to be responsible for each task. The first step in creating a safe school environment is analyzing existing incidents of violence to ensure that members of the school safety committee understand the scope of the problem. They must focus more effort on prevention than on punishment.

Every school needs to develop an action plan. Also schools must understand that consistency is paramount. They should make every effort to have staff and administrators of the school match the diversity of the student body. It is important to ensure that the school safety committee as well as education employees reflect the diversity of the school and appreciate its diversity.

The NSBA survey reports that school districts are using several methods to combat violence: student suspensions (78%), work with social agencies (70%), conflict resolution for staff (60%), trained dogs to find drugs (24%), metal detectors (15%), and closed circuit cameras on school buses (11%).[23]

There are other actions schools should consider.

- Schools should contact other professionals in the community such as: social service providers, early childhood specialists, mental health/family counselors, medical practitioners, court judges and probation officers, parks and recreation department representatives, and staff of state departments of education, health, and human resources to work collaboratively.

- Schools should develop additional initiatives to provide parental support and outreach to develop a constructive school-home partnership. If there is a breakdown in that partnership, the school should develop a volunteer communicator program to work with parents.

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[23]National School Board Association press release, (Jan. 6, 1994), 2.

- Teachers and parents can take a pro-active role against media violence. Children can be taught critical viewing skills so they are able to interpret what they have seen on television.

- When students become violent at school, administrators should include parents/guardians in working with the child. Parents/guardians of any child disciplined for a weapon-related offense should be required to participate in an appropriate parenting support, counseling, or educational session that helps rehabilitate those student. If parents repeatedly refuse to participate in these programs, those parents may be considered to be guilty of child neglect under certain states' statutory definitions.

- Schools should provide successful programs including "home visitor" programs that provide prenatal and postnatal attention and early childhood education. According to the APA, programs that promote social and cognitive skills such as social perspective-taking, generating alternative solutions, enhancing self-esteem, peer negotiation, problem-solving, and anger management are effective. Also programs that work with the family of a high risk child have great potential to prevent aggression. Violence within the family must be treated, as well as sexual violence by and against children and youth. This type of violence has the potential of creating a long-term effect of victimization.

- Schools and communities must reexamine their programs to be sure that they support long-term family and educational needs for prevention rather than just intervention. There is a great need to develop strong, energized community coalitions to create local solutions. Coordinated interagency planning which is targeted to specific and unique problems in a community will bring success.

- Parents can make sure that their children are exposed to higher spiritual and ethical values through religious and community institutions. As the director of the Children's Defense Fund, Marian Wright Edelman, says, "Adults must break the code of silence about the breakdown of spiritual values."

- Schools, communities, and governments can collect data on the prevalence of gangs.
- Schools should try to bring current and prospective gang members into a productive, positive environment.

In addition to all the above, schools should also consider:

- Establish hotlines for students and others to call to report drugs and gun activity on school grounds.
- Review the design of school facilities as well as security requirements for public events.
- Provide violence reduction training for pre-service and in-service training for educators and health professionals who serve school-age children.
- Review teacher and administrator preparation programs to ensure that they include: mediation and conflict resolution techniques; diversity training; issues in schools, school and classroom management; instructional strategies for disruptive students; building a nurturing and supportive school climate for students; handling confidential student data; and identifying and working with alcohol and drug abuse.
- Provide parent-child training programs to teach positive discipline techniques.
- Prohibit the use of corporal punishment in the schools.
- Treat children who have already developed aggressive behavior by providing training in problem-solving skills, child management for parents, family therapy, and interventions at school and in the community.

Innovative ways schools are addressing school violence include training elementary school students as "peace seekers" to break up fights; hiring former gang members to work with students, parents, and teachers to stop students from joining gangs; providing an office for a police officer in the school, having adults serve as "greeters" for anyone entering the school building; developing a school-business partnership to train parents in the workplace; and requiring parents of any student who has been suspended

repeatedly to attend a three-day intervention program before the student is admitted back to class.

B. Organizations

A number of organizations have specific recommendations. The Character Education Partnership, Inc., says that youth violence and other behavior problems drop dramatically in schools that teach ethical values such as respect, caring, honesty, and responsibility.

The APA suggests early childhood interventions for parents, child care, and health care providers; school-based interventions; heightened awareness of cultural diversity; development of the mass media's potential to be part of the solution; limited access to firearms by young people; reduced youth involvement with alcohol and drugs; psychological services for young perpetrators, victims, and witnesses of violence; and education programs to reduce prejudice and hostility.[24]

The Children's Defense Fund calls for more stringent regulation of guns and ammunition, educational preventive measures such as conflict resolution programs, family support programs, jobs for young people, and summer and after-school programs to keep children safe and off the streets when they are not in school.[25]

My organization, the NEA, is concerned, active, and involved. Our members across the nation are participating in many anti violence programs, local initiatives, and activities. On the national level, NEA is working on many fronts to reduce gun violence and improve school safety.

Legislatively, NEA has played a key role in the fight against violence. For years, NEA supported the Brady Bill, signed into law by President Clinton last year. It establishes a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases while local and state law

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[24] American Psychological Association, Op. Cit., 53-73.
[25] Children's Defense Fund, Op. Cit., xviii-xix.

enforcement conduct background checks. NEA supports the Omnibus Crime Bill (H.R. 3355/S.1607), which bans 19 types of assault weapons, and the Safe Schools Act, an initiative providing grants for innovative efforts to eliminate violence in schools.

NEA recently joined the National Coalition Against Violence, an effort by advocacy groups and the media to address the issues of youth violence, guns, and individual, parental, and communal responsibility. CBS and FOX television networks, members of the coalition, have tentatively scheduled "Kids Killing Kids," a one-hour, commercial-free special on April 26, as part of a week of activities on violence.

NEA has also raised public and educator awareness of violence. Earlier this year, NEA hosted the Children's Express hearings on violence, which included testimony by young victims and policy leaders like Attorney General Janet Reno. And for Association members, NEA is producing resources and training materials to help combat violence in schools. Finally, the NEA Health Information Network has co-authored a chapter in the soon-to-be-released American Academy of Pediatrics health manual on the prevention of school violence and the NEA Professional Library offers *School Violence: A Survival Guide for School Staff.*

VI. AS A RESULT OF THE PRECEDING QUESTIONS, WHAT POLICY AGENDAS AND STRATEGIES MAY BE PROPOSED, DEVELOPED, AND IMPLEMENTED SO THAT CRITICAL LOCAL, STATE, AND NATIONAL ACTIONS CAN BE UNDERTAKEN TO ELIMINATE HANDGUNS?

Combating violence is a federal priority. The National Education Goals, adopted in 1990, reflect a concern for school safety. Goal Six states, "By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning."[26]

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[26]National School Boards Association report, Op. Cit., 4.

The Clinton administration is planning a new Anti-Violent Crime Initiative which will designate a team of prosecutors under the U.S. Department of Justice to assist local and state law enforcement officials with the use of wiretaps, sting and surveillance operations, and investigative grand juries to develop cases against gangs.

The program also calls for the creation of mobile special-response teams, employing Justice and Treasury department agents to help local and state governments target the nation's most violent hot spots. If implemented the measure would greatly expand the federal government's role in prosecuting violent crimes, a job which is largely reserved for the states. In 1990, for example, the federal government prosecuted only about 1.5% of the nation's violent offenses.

The U.S. Department of Education is inviting comments on its proposed priorities for grants to train disadvantaged students in violence counseling. The Training in Early Childhood Education and Violence Counseling Program, authorized by the 1992 Higher Education Act amendments requires higher education grantees to create a course of study leading to a two-year certificate or degree in violence counseling and ensure that participants also receive substantial field experience in this area.

- Communities need to ensure full enforcement of the Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990.

The American Psychological Association makes the following recommendations related to government:

- Have the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Public Health Service, and other state and local governmental agencies expand and improve their collection of data on youth violence.

- Have the U.S. Department of Justice further attempt to reconcile and explain the differences between its two major data sets, the Uniform Crime Reporting Program and the National Crime Victimization Survey.

- Have Congress ask all relevant federal agencies to identify successful and promising interventions, programs, and resources for preventing violence and issue a report based on its findings. These agencies would include Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Justice.

- Have Congress encourage federally supported efforts to develop, implement, and evaluate violence prevention and aggression reduction curricula for school use. Also have professional associations such as the APA, NEA, and National Association of Young Children disseminate effective and promising program materials.

- Have Congress, and state and local governments support the funding and development of after-school program in communities with high proportions of at-risk children and youth.

- Have the U.S. Civil Rights Commission undertake a review of federal anti discrimination laws, statutes, and regulations regarding race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and physical disability.[27]

We also need to look at state legislation. For example, in Colorado, Governor Roy Romer and lawmakers produced a trail-blazing gun control law that jails youth found with guns and punishes irresponsible parents.

And on federal, state, and local levels, we need to secure funds so that we can provide in-service programs for school staff, conflict-resolution training for students, drug prevention or anti-gang efforts, or alternative educational programs for extremely disruptive students.

VII. CONCLUSION

Schools cannot be solely responsible for fixing problems of youth violence. Parents, the community, lawmakers, and schools must work together to address this

[27] American Psychological Association, Op. Cit., 73-77.

problem. Unless violence in society is addressed, schools will continue to reflect many outside influences, and violent incidents will continue to be a perennial problem in our society.

Programs at schools are making a difference. We have a lot of evidence to suggest that when students are given the opportunity to be part of the solution, they respond. The students who appear to be the cause of the problem may just be the source of a solution.

Let's not underestimate or mistrust our young people. Let's work together with everyone in the community who touches young people's lives in order to ensure that our youth never touch a weapon or commit a violent act. As an old African proverb states, *"It takes a whole village to raise one child."*